

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 4175, VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2004

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce H.R. 4175, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2004. Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Lane Evans, as well as the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Benefits Subcommittee, HENRY BROWN and MICHAEL MICHAUD, respectively, join me as original cosponsors of the bill. H.R. 4175 would provide a cost-of-living adjustment to veterans' benefits, effective December 1, 2004.

The VA Committee periodically reviews the service-connected disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) programs to ensure that the benefits provide reasonable and adequate compensation for disabled veterans and their families. Based on this review, Congress acts annually to provide a cost-of-living adjustment in compensation and DIC benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Congress has provided increases in these rates for every fiscal year since 1976. The Administration's fiscal year 2005 budget submission includes funding for a projected 1.3 percent increase.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF
MERCED POLICE OFFICER
STEPHAN GRAY

HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Merced Police Officer Stephan Gray, who was killed on April 14 in the line of duty. He was the first officer killed in the Merced Police Department's 115-year history.

During his 7 years of distinguished service in Merced, Officer Gray represented the very best in law enforcement. In the course of his work in the department's Gang Violence Suppression Unit and the Special Operations Unit, he consistently went above and beyond the call of duty and was known for his extensive involvement in the community.

Officer Gray received numerous thank you letters from citizens for his work and commendations for assisting in the capture of a dangerous criminal street gang member and saving the life of an 11-month-old infant.

He made a special effort to fully understand his beat, even visiting streetside basketball courts and baseball fields. Residents of south Merced appreciated Officer Gray's presence, and his influence was immeasurable.

In short, Officer Gray was the role model that communities like Merced so desperately need. The city will miss his special dedication and selfless service. I hope that this tragedy will shed light on his important work and inspire others to the same calling.

Officer Gray is survived by his wife, Michelle, and three children, Landess, Isaiah,

and Cameron. I offer the entire Gray family my condolences.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL
PRIMARY IMMUNE DEFICIENCY
DISEASES AWARENESS WEEK

HON. SHERROD BROWN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues in recognizing the week of April 19 as National Primary Immune Deficiency Diseases Awareness Week. Primary immune deficiency diseases (PIDD) are genetic disorders in which part of the body's immune system is missing or does not function properly. The World Health Organization recognizes more than 150 primary immune diseases, which affect as many as 50,000 people in the United States. Fortunately, 70 percent of PIDD patients are able to maintain their health through regular infusions of a plasma product known as intravenous immunoglobulin. IGIV helps bolster the immune system and provides critical protection against infection and disease.

I am familiar with primary immune deficiencies because a family in my district, the Gargaszs, have a son Dylan who has a primary immune deficiency disease. Dylan was born looking healthy, but by his first month checkup he had a raging ear infection, followed by chronic infections throughout his first year of life. Additionally, Dylan was failing to thrive and grow like a normal child. Dylan spent at least one day a week in the doctor's office, and was hospitalized with pneumonia five times by 18 months old. Finally, at 18 months, Dylan's mother took him to Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, where an immunologist finally diagnosed him with a primary immune deficiency disease. Dylan started his IGIV therapy once a week, and now at 6 years old, is doing relatively well. His younger brother and mother are now being tested to see if they have a primary immune deficiency disease.

Dylan is not unique with the difficulty and delay in diagnosis of his primary immune deficiency disease. Despite the recent progress in PIDD research, the average length of time between the onset of symptoms in a patient and a definitive diagnosis of PIDD is over 9 years. In the interim, those afflicted may suffer repeated and serious infections and possibly irreversible damage to internal organs. That is why it is critical that we raise awareness about these illnesses in the general public and the health care community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Immune Deficiency Foundation for its leadership in this area and I am pleased to join them in recognizing the week of April 19 as National Primary Immune Deficiency Diseases Awareness Week. I encourage my colleagues to work with us to help improve the quality of life for PIDD patients and their families.

CONGRATULATING EDINBURG
NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

HON. RUBEN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Edinburg North High School for being selected for one of the 2004 College Board Inspiration Awards. Edinburg North is one of three exemplary high schools in the nation being honored for their steadfast commitment to fostering student success in some of America's most poverty-stricken communities. Each school receives a prize of \$25,000 to use in furthering its academic goals. The Inspiration Awards recognize outstanding work in improving the academic environment and helping economically disadvantaged students achieve the promise of higher education. I would like to congratulate the superintendent, Eugenio Gutierrez, the principal, Mario Salinas, the teachers, students, and entire school community for this prestigious award.

Edinburg North High School is truly an inspiration for all of us who value education and academic excellence for all students. For the Hispanic community, it reaffirms our core faith in our own potential. Over 95 percent of the students at Edinburg North are Hispanic, and eighty percent of them are bilingual.

Edinburg North High School has succeeded in the face of many challenges. More than half of its students participate in the free and reduced price lunch program. Many students are the children of migrant and seasonal farm workers, and many of these young people work in the fields themselves. As recently as the late 1990s, Edinburg North's poor academic performance led the state of Texas to notify all parents that they had the option of sending their children to another school.

The school community—students, parents, teachers, administrators, local officials, and community leaders—made a commitment to turn things. The school did not merely aim for proficiency, but rather it reached for excellence with stunning results.

The school community decided although its students come from the most economically disadvantaged part of the district, they were not going to be educationally disadvantaged. Edinburg North High School made access to challenging courses a number one priority. It instituted an "open-door" policy for advanced placement courses, and now enrolls more students in college-level courses than any other school in the city. Over the last five years, Edinburg North has doubled the number of students taking at least one advanced placement exam.

This focus on rigorous courses has opened the doors to higher education for students of Edinburg North, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. Last year almost three-quarters of the students were accepted to college, including some of the most selective institutions in the nation, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dartmouth College, Columbia University, and Rice University.

This is what is possible when we invest in excellence in the Hispanic community. I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting Edinburg North High School for its achievement and applauding the college Board for sponsoring the